**Eileen Blair**

**Wiki Assignment #1:**

**Define “Action Research” and discuss a current educational issue/possible research topic that is of interest to “you.”**

Action Research refers to research performed by practicing teachers and administrators; in which everyday problems and issues are addressed. Teaching is a profession in which one is expected to be reflective on their work. Teachers are expected to review their own work, reflect, and investigate, in order to improve their ability to instruct students (Gordon, 2011). Action research requires teachers to ask a particular question, investigate, and analyze data. There are a number of problematic issues found throughout the educational system. While many different universities conduct research studies examining the education process, many of their findings and suggested solutions are not practical in the Elementary setting. Teachers conduct action research in their own classrooms to find solutions to these issues. Action research is considered a systematic form of inquiry. Teachers and administrators search for solutions to classroom-based problems (Diana T., 2011). The solutions found are practical, and can be applied immediately. The ultimate goal is for the teacher to improve their instruction. The issue I will be researching is the relationship between technology based learning and ESL students. Does the use of technology improve ESL learners in transitioning into mainstream educational programs? Are technology-based teaching tools being utilized? Technology is becoming more prominent in educational programs. Educators use smart-boards, tablets, and other audiovisual tools to enhance their instruction. In recent years, many areas throughout the United States have experienced an increase in the number of ESL students. I would like to research how technology improves ESL learners in becoming proficient in the English Language, and if educators are using these tools.

**Defining the Problem – discuss the need for intervention.**

The problem I would like to research and investigate is whether technology-based teaching tools are most effective in teaching ESL/ELL learners the English Language. The ESL/ELL student population has grown drastically within the last few decades. Many educators believe that technology is the best method to teach ESL/ELL learners to communicate using the English Language. The combination of technology with academic goals allows students to take control of their own meaning-making. The use of technology creates socially mediated literacy activities that result in the development of language and thinking (Meskill, Mossop, & Bates, 1998). Are teachers equipped to use technology -based teaching tools? Many teachers may not be educated in technology, and must be trained in how to use such tools, if technology is truly the most effective method. Can schools afford the technology needed to teach ESL/ELL learners?

**Is their prior research? Name at least two sources.**

There has been a great deal of research performed on ESL/ELL learners. The implementation of technology into the Elementary curriculum has also been researched. The concept of using technology to teach ESL/ELL learners is a more recent concept, but has been addressed by numerous researchers. Shenghua Zha, Paul Kelly, MeeAeng Ko Park, and Gail Fitzgerald from the University of Missouri-Columbia conducted a study which focused on the use of computer mediated discussion boards in teaching students how to communicate using the English Language. This study emphasized the importance of the communicative competency and role of CMC (computer mediated communication) in teaching the English Language. Students participated in different activities using discussion boards. The researchers found that students learned from their peers, and developed new learning strategies, as well as strengthened their ability to participate in peer dialogue (Zha et al., 2006).

Another example of research conducted is described in an article entitled,*Effective Learning Outcomes of ESL Elementary and Secondary Students Utilizing Educational Technology infused with Constructivist Pedagogy* by Rebecca Lee. Lee discusses the research conducted by Bates, Meskill, Mossop entitled *Electronic Text and English as a Second Language.* The researchers (Meskill et al., 1999) selected two teachers from Indian River Central School District, New York to participate in the study. They observed various software such as authoring software and simulations in use. They found that teaching students using E-Texts provided the students with many different components, such as visual, audio, and textual components. The researchers found that computers are dynamic tools that allow students to construct meaning through the use of multiple senses (Lee, 2006).

**Pros and Cons: Name at least two sources**:

Pro: The article entitled, *Web-Based English as a Second Language Instruction and Learning: Strengths and Limitations*, written by Daisy Pinto, describe numerous benefits of web-based instruction. Pinto believes that the using the web to teach students the English Language allows the students to learn in a non-threatening environment. Students are often nervous and fear mispronunciation and error when learning the English Language in the typical classroom setting. The methods including discussion boards, chats, interactive websites, powerpoints, tutorials, and email, are believed to be innovative ways to teach students the English Language without inducing anxiety. Web-based instruction offers flexibility, and appeals to students interests. Students are also able to use tools at home, and learn at their own pace, without the pressure to learn at the same pace as their peers (Pino, 2008).

Con: After researching a number of studies, it seems that most educators agree that technology infused into the curriculum is an effective method of teaching ESL/ELL learners the English Language. The issue that many educators question is practicality and reality. In the article entitled,*Effective Learning Outcomes of ESL Elementary and Secondary Students Utilizing Educational Technology infused with Constructivist Pedagogy* by Rebecca Lee, Lee acknowledges that many schools do not receive grants for computers, and other technology-based tools. Most schools have outdated computers and cannot afford new computers. Many teachers are not trained to use such technology based tools. While Lee does not doubt that technology will assist ESL/ ELL students in learning English, she does not believe we can rely on technology. Lee believes schools and teachers must look to other alternatives other than technology to help their ESLstudents learn English and become successful (Lee, 2006).

**Current Instructional Strategies? Name at least two sources.**

Many educators are currently teaching ESL/ELL learners without any prior training in ESL/ELL education. English is taught to the class, in which students are asked to repeat words and speak in front of the entire classroom. While student can learn from their peers, many students fear error and mispronunciation of the language, which results in the student not participating due to fear (Pino, 2008).

Paul Abraham and Janet Chumley from Departmentof Education and Human Services, Simmons College conducted a study in which they randomly selected English teachers throughout the State of Massachusetts in order to determine which methods of ESL instruction are most widely used.There are many different methods of instruction used by ESL educators. The four main methods include the intact classroom, the sheltered English Class, the pull-out model, and the push-in model. *The intact ESL classroom* involves English as the medium of instruction. The students are taught basic directions and simple interactive language, as their survival language. Another method is known as *sheltered English classes* in which the focus is on content learning. Students focus on comprehending the content, and learn the English Language as they study multiple subject areas. English input is modified. The pull-out method, involves students being pulled out of their classroom, and working individually or in small groups with an ESL specialist. The push-in model requires the ESL teachers to work with the classroom teachers in instruction, to support the needs of the ESL students (Abraham & Chumley, 2000).

The research found on current ESL instruction did not elaborate on the use of technology. However, there are many ESL/ELL teachers that have developed their own techniques for teaching ESL/ELL learners. Judie Haynes has been teaching elementary English as a Second Language for 26 years, with majority of her career spent in New Jersey. Haynes ESL program was named a "Best Practice" by the New Jersey Department of Education in 2001 and a "New Jersey Model ESL Program" in 2006. Haynes’ approach involves computer technology, with an emphasis on interactive websites. Haynes believes that technology is an excellent teaching tool for ESL/ELL learners, and believes many ESL teachers are behind in technology (Haynes, 2007).

**Practitioners/Theorists:**

Many educators believe that language learning is best taught through the combination of Constructivism and technology. Piaget (1929) believed learning took place through the process of assimilation and accommodation. Piaget believed that students learned new ideas through the exposure of experiences, in combination with current and former knowledge. The Piagetian principles emphasize the learner’s ability to construct meaning though their own individual experiences as well as through peer interactions. Based on this idea, technology can offers students a personal experience, as well collaborative peer interaction, in which students construct their own meaning, and learn the English Language (Green, 2005).

Lee also believes that technology is effective when infused with constructivism-based instruction. When using computers, students are able to work collaboratively and individually. Students guide their peers rather than compete with their peers. Students ask open-ended questions, and these questions help to guide the lesson. Students create their own meaning and take ownership over their learning (Lee, 2006).

**What is your proposed intervention? (Independent Variable). Name at least one source.**

My proposed interaction would be to implement technology into ESL programs in the most affordable way. I would like to study how ESL learners respond to instruction that includes the use of technology. As stated by many researchers, one major problem with the use of technology is the budget (Pino, 2008). Technology-based teaching tools are expensive. We cannot assume that all students have access to the internet. Relying on students using the internet as a learning tool can result in a very serious socio-economic issue, in which students living in low-income homes do not surpass the wealthier students due to a lack of resources. This concept is known as the digital divide (Pino, 2008). Most schools in the United States have internet access, a projector, or a VCR. I would like to propose the creation of a program in which teachers use free websites, show videos and different aspects of media to ESL students. The internet is a very rich educational resource, and offers a great deal of free information. I would like to set a particular budget, and ask ESL educators to create ESL lessons using visual, audio, and textual components. I do not believe that teachers must use the most expensive programs in order to use technology to teach English. Students may work in small groups, if there are enough computers to support group work. The class would be educated on the use of the public library. The students would be taught about the resources the public library has to offer, such as computers with internet access. The lessons would be based on the students’ access to internet. If the school was able to provide computers to the students, or offer a computer lab, lessons would be created to include concepts such as interactive websites, discussion boards, e-texts, and email. If students did not have access to computers in schools, teachers would use different aspects of media, such as videos with different types of audio components to teach the students English.

**How will you define (construct) and measure your intervention? (Dependent Variable).**

Measuring the effectiveness of technology in ESL instruction seems like a complex task, however using assessment tools as simple as a checklist could help to determine if technology is helping students learn English. I would like to create a checklist to be filled out about each individual student. Students would be assessed on their ability to pronounce words, the correct usage of language, their ability to communicate in social interaction, their ability to write expressively, and their participation and comfort in the classroom setting. I would assess each student before the implementation of technology in the ESL lessons. After about 4 weeks of using technology, I would assess each student again using the same checklist, and see if students have improved. I would also ask students to fill out a small survey to the best of their ability after the implementation of technology to understand the students’ feelings towards the use of technology.

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